



Integrated Health Services, Inc.

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February 24, 2022

Testimony to Inform HB-05037: An Act Adjusting the State Budget for Biennium Ending June 30, 2023

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and Members of the Appropriations
Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a written testimony to offer recommendations for adjustments to the State Biennium Budget as outlined in HB-05037. My name is Sherry Linton-Massiah; I am the President and Chief Executive Officer of the non-profit organization, Integrated Health Services (IHS). We provide evidence-based comprehensive and preventive health care services in school settings to the full age continuum of students, including preschoolers, school-age children, and adults. At IHS, our mission is to improve students' potential to achieve and maintain wellness by reducing and addressing barriers to care. Our School Based Health Centers (SBHCs) primarily serve uninsured and underinsured students and families. For many of the families we serve, the SBHC is the medical home for their students, providing vital services that would otherwise go unmet.

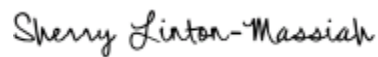
The prolonged Covid-19 pandemic continues to put significant strain on the health and well-being of students, families, and systems like school-based health centers working to address the complex needs being experienced. As the mental health needs of students continue to increase, SBHCs lack the capacity to effectively address the presenting issues. To illustrate the issue, at one IHS school-based health center site accessible to 472 high school students, there were 89 new enrollments for mental health services in one month, with 48% of the screened students presenting with positive results for depression and/or anxiety. It is imperative that the resilience of our scholars be bolstered with the mental health services necessary to mitigate their compounded adverse experiences, which are exacerbated by the dynamics of the pandemic. Students are forced to balance the loss of loved ones, isolation, health issues, and comprehending constantly shifting policies and practices with expectations for academic success. This is an unreasonable ask of young people, without sufficient supports. To build upon the resilience of students and promote their overall wellness, the aim of school-based health centers, like IHS, is to provide in-depth and on-going

clinical services focused on the root cause of adverse experiences. The outcome and long-term impact of this level of care includes and extend well beyond immediate academic success.

With the aforementioned in mind, we ask that this Biennium Budget include increased funding to support School-Based Health Centers, in alignment with the 2021 Public Act 21-35, and corresponding recommendations from the Workgroup of that legislation, which is an “Act Equalizing Comprehensive Access to Mental, Behavioral, and Physical Health Care in Response to the Pandemic.” Increased investment in school-based health centers is needed as a vital component of community healthcare systems focused on underserved populations.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this urgent matter.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sherry Linton-Massiah".

Sherry Linton-Massiah